

Message Text

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S E C R E T ROME 5930

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IT

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT TO ITALY

REF: ROME 5924 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY PRESIDENT SADAT AND HIS PARTY WERE WARMLY GREETED IN ROME
APRIL 5-8 DURING A SUCCESSFUL VISIT DISTINGUISHED NOT SO MUCH
BY TANGIBLE SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENT BUT MORE BY ILLUSTRATING AND
STRENGTHENING THE CLOSE AND FRIENDLY TIES BETWEEN THE TWO STATES.
END SUMMARY.

1. AN INFORMED OFFICIAL OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS
WRAPPED UP THE SADAT-FAHMY/MORO-RUMOR EXCHANGES ON POLITICALLY-
RELATED SUBJECTS AS FOLLOWS. OTHER FACETS BEING REPORTED SEPAR-

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ATELY.

2. SADAT'S EXPOSITION. SADAT RECONSTRUCTED EVENTS SINCE HE TOOK POWER IN EGYPT, STRESSING THAT HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MAN OF PEACE. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN THE AMERICAN SECRETARY OF STATE HAD COME FORTH WITH THE ROGERS PLAN, SADAT WAS RECEPTIVE. UNFORTUNATELY THE ISRAELI LOBBY IN THE US BROUGHT ITS FULL WEIGHT TO BEAR ON ROGERS AND NOTHING CAME OF THE PLAN. AS TIME WORE ON, THE SOVIETS INCREASINGLY ATTEMPTED TO ASSERT HEGEMONY OVER EGYPT, TO WHICH HE REACTED BY EXPELLING THEIR MILITARY ADVISORS IN 1972. IN THESE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, "I STARTED MY (1973) MILITARY EFFORT, WHICH WOULD HAVE SUCCEEDED HAD NOT THE US ENTERED THE PICTURE". FINALLY AFTER SADAT AND SECRETARY KISSINGER MET, THE US UNDERTOOK TO ENGAGE "IN THE PROCESS OF PEACE". SADAT IS THOROUGHLY SATISFIED WITH HIS RELATIONS WITH THE US, WHICH ARE AND HAVE BEEN BASED ON "HONESTY AND LOYALTY" DURING TWO ADMINISTRATIONS.

3. THE SOVIETS GREW INCREASINGLY ANNOYED WITH SADAT AS HE BEGAN TO HEED AMERICAN COUNSEL, AND SHIFTED THEIR SUPPORT TO SYRIA. THIS LEFT SADAT BETWEEN TWO FIRES: SOVIET/SYRIA ON ONE SIDE AND US/ISRAEL ON THE OTHER. WHEN SADAT COMPLAINED BITTERLY ENOUGH, THE SOVIETS WHO CAME THROUGH WITH SOME MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN 1975 WHICH DID NOTHING SUBSTANTIAL TO REDRESS SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS.

4. COMMENT: THE ITALIAN PARTICIPANTS NOTED THAT SADAT DID NOT CRITICIZE OR QUESTION US ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL. RATHER, HE TAKES IT AS A "FACT OF LIFE", A GIVEN OF HIS EQUATION IN THE SEARCH FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. "THE AMERICANS HOLD ALL THE CARDS".

5. AT THIS POINT THE SOVIETS ARE DOING ALL POSSIBLE TO ISOLATE EGYPT AND SADAT, TRYING TO FOSTER DIVISIONS AMONG ARAB STATES. VIDE: SOVIET ARMS IN LIBYA AND SYRIA, AND BACKING OF THE PLO.

6. STEP-BY-STEP HAD ITS MERITS, EVIDENCED BY EGYPTIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEACE, SUCH AS THE SECOND DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, EGYPTIAN REPOPULATIONS OF THE SUEZ CANAL ZONE WITH 600,000 PEOPLE, REOPENING THE CANAL ITSELF, ETC. NOW, HOWEVER, SADAT AGREES WITH PRESIDENT FORD THAT "THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS SHOULD BE CENTERED ON THE GENEVA CONFERENCE.

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7. SADAT RECOGNIZED THAT THE AMERICAN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN CREATES "A DELICATE MOMENT" FOR THE AMERICANS. NEVERTHELESS HE THOUGHT OF GENEVA IN TERMS OF TWO STAGES OR PHASES. THE FIRST, WHICH MIGHT BE BROUGHT OFF THIS YEAR DESPITE THE ELECTIONS, WOULD CONSIST OF A "SKELETON" AGREEMENT, A BARE OUTLINE OF POINTS AGREED IN PRINCIPLE BETWEEN THE PARTICIPANTS BUT ONE SUFFICIENTLY COMPREHENSIVE TO GIVE GOOD PROMISE OF SUCCESS IN PHASE 88: THE

GENEVA CONFERENCE ITSELF WHICH WOULD WORK OUT THE ACTUAL WORDING OF THE TERMS OF SETTLEMENT, PRESUMABLY AFTER THE AMERICAN ELECTIONS.

8. SADAT SAID THAT THE PLO "SHOULD BE" AT THE CONFERENCE, BUT DID NOT SUGGEST AT WHAT MOMENT OR THROUGH WHAT MODALITIES. HE WAS MUCH Milder ON THIS POINT IN PRIVATE TALKS WITH THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES THAN IN HIS PUBLIC COMMENTS (SEE BELOW) IN ROME.

9. SADAT NOTED THAT, HAVING BROKEN WITH THE SOVIETS, HE IS TURNING TO THE WEST FOR THE ASSISTANCE EGYPT NEEDS. EGYPT'S ECONOMIC SITUATION IS BAD BUT BY NO MEANS HOPELESS. HE CAN COUNT ON FUNDS FROM RICH MODERATE ARAB STATES AND IRAN, FROM THE DEVELOPED STATES IN THE AID-EGYPT "CONSORTIUM", FROM SOME SALE OF OIL, AND FROM GREATER REVENUES FROM THE CANAL, PARTICULARLY WHEN WORK UNDERWAY TO INCREASE ITS CAPACITY IS FINISHED.

10. NEVERTHELESS, EGYPT HOPES FOR ASSISTANCE FROM ITALY, WHICH HAS BEEN AMONG THE MOST SYMPATHETIC IN THE EC NINE. HE HOPED ITALY WOULD BE ABLE TO HELP HIM DIVERSIFY HIS SOURCES OF ARMS.

11. THE ITALIAN RESPONSE. ITALY FULLY APPRECIATES THE CHOICES FOR PEACE WHICH SADAT HAS MADE. ITALY HAS DONE ITS UTMOST TO SUSTAIN THE EGYPTIAN NEEDS IN THE EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK, TO BRING THE EC NINE CLOSER TO THE EGYPTIAN VIEW AND SYMPATHY TOWARD LEGITIMATE EGYPTIAN REQUESTS.

ITALY, TOO, APPRECIATES THE INDISPENSABLE AMERICAN ROLE IN THE AREA AND HOPES THAT THE US WILL PERSEVERE DESPITE THE ELECTIONS. ITALY HAS ALWAYS TRIED TO PERSUADE ISRAEL TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE, WITHOUT MUCH SUCCESS, GIVEN ITALIAN LACK OF ANY REAL LEVERAGE.

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12. ITALY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT THREE PRINCIPLES MUST GOVERN ANY NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT:

A) WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAEL FROM ALL TERRITORIES OCCUPIES SINCE 1967;

B) THE RIGHT OF ALL STATES OF THE REGION TO LIVE IN FULL RESPECT OF THEIR SOVEREIGNTY, POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY; AND

C) RECOGNITION OF THE NATIONAL RIGHT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE WHO SEEN TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT STATE OF THEIR OWN IN THE AREA.

QEM ON THE MODALITIES OF A SETTLEMENT, ITALY BELIEVES STEP-BY-STEP NO LONGER SERVES THE NEED. WHAT IS NEEDED IS A GLOBAL

SETTLEMENT AT A CAREFULLY PREPARED GENEVA CONFERENCE. "ANY INITIATIVE" WHICH WOULD HELP THIS PROCESS WOULD BE WELCOME TO ITALY. EUROPE CAN PLAY A SIDE ROLE IN TRYING TO FACILITATE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT WOULD NOT BE A PARTY TO THEM.

14. ITALY HAS NO SIZEABLE WAR INDUSTRY BUT IS SYMPATHETIC WITH SADAT'S NEED TO DIVERSIFY HIS SOURCES. ITALY WILL DO WHAT IT CAN TO HELP WITH EGYPTIAN REQUESTS TO PURCHASE. COMMENT: OUR SOURCE CHARACTERIZED THIS RESPONSE AS "SYMPATHY, BUT NO COMMITMENT".

15. BEYOND AGREEMENT TO STUDY VARIOUS AREAS OF COOPERATION (SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL, AGRICULTURAL, CULTURAL, ETC), SADAT TOOK LITTLE TANGIBLE WITH HIM ON LEAVING ROME. THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE (COPY BEING POUCHED WE) NOTES THE GRANT OF A TIED LIRE CREDIT EQUIVALENT TO \$40 MILLION FOR WORK TO BE DONE BY ITALIAN COMPANIES IN THE CANAL ZONE. WE UNDERSTAND THE MAJOR PART WILL GO TO REFURBISHMENT OF THE RAILROAD BETWEEN SUEZ AND ISMALIA. THE LIRE CREDIT IS NOT NEW; ALTHOUGH THE COMMUNIQUE DOES NOT SAY SO, IT IS BELIEVED TO BE SIMPLY A SHIFT OF AN EARLIER UNUSED CREDIT IN THAT AMOUNT (FOR WORK ON THE EGYPTIAN PIPELINE) TO A NEW PROJECT. THE PRESS ALSO REPORTS A GRANT OF 50 THOUSAND TONS OF WHEAT BY ITALY TO EGYPT, BUT SO FAR WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION.

16. ATMOSPHERICS. BOTH SIDES CONSIDER THE VISIT HIGHLY
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SUCCESSFUL. THE EGYPTIAN DELEGATION WAS IN A RELAXED GOOD MOOD, MADE ITS POINTS TO THE ITALIANS BUT DID NOT PRESS THEM TOO HARD, AND INDICATED APPRECIATION OF ITALIAN SUPPORT IN EUROPE, PAST AND FUTURE. THE ITALIAN MEDIA GAVE FRIENDLY AND GENEROUS TREATMENT TO THE EGYPTIANS. EVEN COMMUNIST L'UNITA NOTED THAT "MOST OF THE ITALIAN PRESS WAS OF THE VIEW THAT EVERYTHING POSSIBLE MUST BE DONE TO STRENGTHEN THE TIES BETWEEN ROME AND CAIRO".VOLPE

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